

VZCZCXRO1862  
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC  
DE RUEHHK #2949 3370939  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 030939Z DEC 07  
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3563  
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 002949

SIPDIS

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP AND EAP/CM  
NSC FOR DENNIS WILDER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2032  
TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR SOCI HK CH  
SUBJECT: HONG KONG VOTERS ELECT PRO-DEMOCRACY LEGISLATOR

REF: A. HONG KONG 02934  
B. HONG KONG 02855

Classified By: Acting E/P Section Chief Jeff Zaiser; Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Former Hong Kong Government Chief Secretary and pan-democratic leader Anson Chan won the December 2 Legislative Council (Legco) by-election, defeating her equally high-profile pro-government opponent Regina Ip by a 55 to 43 percent margin. After the election, Chan said the poll results indicated the people of Hong Kong were anxious to push forward to full democracy. Ip has announced that she will try again for a Legco seat in the September 2008 Legco general election. The pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB), which had strongly backed Ip, already is looking ahead to that election, in which it hopes to equal or increase its current holding of eleven Legco seats. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Comment: Chan was carried to victory by the high (52 percent) turnout rate, suggesting that Hong Kong's booming stock market and healthy economy did not dampen the desire for democracy among Hong Kong Island's middle and upper-middle class voters. She also benefited from continuing concerns about Ip's record while Secretary for Security in 2003, when her abrasive stewardship of the highly unpopular and ultimately unsuccessful Article 23 national security legislation led to her resignation. While the pan-democrats have survived to fight another day, Chan's solid victory has not resolved their deeper strategic, organizational, and financial issues. It is not yet clear whether Chan, a reluctant candidate this year at age 67, will run for a full four-year term next year or choose to resume her retirement. End Comment.

Democrats Get the Vote Out

-----

¶3. (SBU) On Sunday, December 2, former Hong Kong Government Chief Secretary and pan-democratic leader Anson Chan won the by-election to fill the Hong Kong Island Legco seat left vacant by the death of DAB Chairman Ma Lik last August. Chan gained just under 55 percent of the vote, while her main challenger, former Hong Kong Government Secretary for Security Regina Ip, received almost 43 percent. The turnout rate compared favorably to the most recent Legco by-election seven years ago (33 percent), and also to the 2004 Legco general election (55.6 percent). In the weeks prior to this election, the pan-democrats had worried that voter apathy might cost Chan the election; specifically, they believed a turnout rate of less than 45 percent would give the election to Ip (ref a).

¶4. (C) In her post-election remarks Chan, who had centered

her campaign on the pan-democrats' demand for rapid implementation of full universal suffrage, opined that the "road to democracy would continue to widen." She said the poll results indicated that the people of Hong Kong were anxious to push forward to full democracy, which would be the only way to safeguard Hong Kong's freedoms and values, build a compassionate and fair society, and enhance social justice.

Civic Party Secretary General Joseph Cheng told us that the election results showed that the "Hong Kong people were sensible and valued preservation of checks and balances. They do not want a one-party situation." In that sense, Cheng believes Chan benefited from the pan-democrats' poor showing in the November 18 district council elections (ref b), which were dominated by the DAB.

¶5. (C) For its part, the DAB already is looking beyond the by-election to plan for the 2008 Legco general election for all sixty members, thirty of whom will be elected through universal suffrage in geographic districts. On December 3, DAB Chairman Tam Yiu-chung told the Consul General that his party already was preparing for the "very important" 2008 election, in which it hoped to maintain or increase its current number of Legco seats (11). Tam said the DAB had "learned a lot" in the by-election. He believed Ip would run again, although she would need to find a better way to handle her Article 23 "baggage." Tam and other DAB leaders admitted they were somewhat surprised by the intensity of continuing popular concern about this issue.

Cunningham